



# Using Mandatory Recycling to Reduce Disposal Costs

## Introduction

MassDEP Municipal Waste Reduction Toolkit



In the *Beyond 2000 Plan*, MassDEP established a goal of reducing waste by 70% through waste reduction and recycling efforts. MassDEP remains committed to this aggressive waste reduction goal by working in partnership with cities and towns to enhance recycling.

One action that cities and towns may choose to reach these goals is to establish and implement a mandatory recycling initiative at the local level. Many cities and towns have found that these initiatives are not only effective at increasing recycling, but also result in financial savings through avoided disposal costs and recycling revenues.

Several communities across the Commonwealth have already begun enforcing local recycling bylaws and mandates with great success. Examples include North Andover, Chelmsford, Saugus and Tyngsborough, all of which have seen sustained decreases in waste disposed and increases in recycling. These reductions have translated into significant financial savings. The success of these initiatives relied not only on local enforcement, but extensive education on the benefits of increased recycling in the community. Through clear and effective communication, most of the communities have achieved great success without significant actual enforcement and little or no financial penalties.

The materials in this module have been provided by communities already implementing successful programs and are designed to help you start a similar initiative in your community.

MassDEP supports a community's decision to enact mandatory recycling and efforts to enforce local recycling ordinances. In doing so, MassDEP has developed case studies and collected various guidance and model requirements.

- MassDEP's Department Approved Recycling Program (DARP) recognizes the efforts of communities that enforce local recycling ordinances by giving credit to those communities that implement enforcement programs.
- MassDEP is actively enforcing the waste bans at disposal facilities and pursuing enforcement against haulers and generators that dispose of banned materials.
- MassDEP offers technical and financial assistance to communities to help implement initiatives that result in increased community recycling.





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## Table of Contents

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Below is a list of the items contained within this module. Please note that these materials are provided in an electronic modifiable version. You are encouraged to customize any of these items to best meet the needs of your community.

There are many types of local enforcement initiatives your community may wish to implement – whether it's a disposal ban on any visible recyclables, cardboard, or bulky items, or enforcing mandatory recycling, this guide provides municipal recycling coordinators with easy-to-use how-to information to get started.

### Planning Tools:

- ⇒ Benefits of Mandatory Recycling
- ⇒ Getting Started – Step by Step Guide to Enforcement
- ⇒ Massachusetts Waste Ban Definitions
- ⇒ Fact Sheet: Your Municipality and Waste Ban Compliance

### Education and Publicity Materials:

- ⇒ Hauler Guidance
- ⇒ Sample “Sorry” sticker
- ⇒ Sample brochure for educating residents

*The above three items were produced by the North Andover Solid Waste Advisory Committee.*

- ⇒ “Friendly Reminder” Mandatory Recycling Doorhangers

### Case Studies and Supporting Documentation:

- ⇒ Chelmsford – includes sample mandatory bylaw
- ⇒ North Andover – includes sample mandatory bylaw
- ⇒ Saugus
- ⇒ Tyngsborough





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## *Benefits of Mandatory Recycling*

MassDEP Municipal Waste *Reduction Toolkit*



### Financial

Massachusetts communities pay some of the highest disposal fees in the country. Averaging between \$60-\$80 a ton, communities are literally throwing away millions of dollars annually to dispose of materials that should be recycled.

Communities across the state are realizing the potential savings from enforcing local waste bans:

- In one year, the Town of North Andover saved \$180,000 on disposal costs and has saved \$250,000 to date.
- In the first year of the program, the Town of Chelmsford saved over \$99,000 in disposal fees and is recycling considerably more and throwing less in the trash.
- Saugus has saved more than \$60,000 in disposal costs since the inception of its program in FY06
- Tyngsborough found that 85% of previously non-recycling households were recycling after the onset of mandatory recycling.

### DARP

MassDEP's Department Approved Recycling Program (DARP) recognizes the efforts of communities that enforce local recycling ordinances by giving credit to those communities that implement enforcement programs. DARP status reflects a municipality's commitment to providing access to recycling and composting programs and to educating residents about waste reduction.

DARP status exempts municipal solid waste loads from comprehensive inspections for "waste ban" materials (paper; glass, metal and plastic containers; leaves and yard waste) at solid waste disposal facilities. Waste loads from DARP communities are still inspected for the presence of white goods, lead-acid batteries, cathode ray tubes (CRTs), or whole tires.

### MassDEP Assistance

- MassDEP is actively enforcing the waste bans at disposal facilities and pursuing enforcement against haulers and generators that dispose of banned materials.
- MassDEP offers technical and financial assistance to communities to help implement initiatives that result in increased community recycling.
- MassDEP will work with interested non-DARP cities and towns to improve their recycling and composting programs and obtain DARP status.





# Using Mandatory Recycling to Reduce Disposal Costs

## Getting Started

MassDEP Municipal Waste Reduction Toolkit



### Step-by-Step How To Guide

Whatever your community's reason for pursuing enforcement of mandatory recycling, the benefits are undeniable. Less waste means less disposal costs and for some communities more material recycled translates into more revenue from the sale of those recyclables.

While it may take some time to get started, the return on investment is quickly realized. These "how-to's" are suggested steps for implementation, all of which may not apply to your town/city. Use your discretion to determine which of these measures best fit the needs of your community, or contact your MAC (MassDEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator) to further discuss.

### Planning Phase

**Political climate:** It's important to have the backing of your community leaders when pursuing this type of program. It may require passing an ordinance, adopting a bylaw, town meeting or it may be something as simple as your officials deciding that your community should pursue.

**Determine program specifics.** Before you can communicate with your hauler and residents, you'll need to determine what kind of enforcement program you'll have.

Things to consider:

- What materials are you prohibiting from disposal? All visible recyclables? Cardboard?
- What action will be taken against those violating the disposal prohibition?
- Will you implement fines on those non-compliant households?
- Will there be a grace-period of "friendly reminders" before fines go into effect?
- Will you include businesses? Will it include municipal buildings and schools?
- Will you hire an enforcement coordinator? Look for a free intern?
- Is there any funding or assistance available from MassDEP for implementation?

**Determine point of contact:** No matter how effectively you've communicated with residents, there will be those who have questions, and you'll need to designate a point of contact to handle them. This person is recommended to be listed on all correspondence related to enforcement. If you are uncertain who that will be, or expect the role may change, be sure to include a phone number to a real person at the very least who will be able to connect residents to the proper person.

**Determine start date of program:** Once your community has decided to pursue enforcement, allow several months to create outreach materials and hire an enforcement person;

Consider your start date – while the first of the year may seem like a good time to begin implementation, starting this type of program during the cold winter months can make for an unpleasant experience. Starting in the spring or summer is a good time because the weather is nice, and by the time the cold winter months roll in, your residents will be seasoned veterans and your enforcement officer and haulers won't be spending as much time outside stickering and leaving notices for residents.



Meet with your hauler to discuss their role. Your hauler is critical to making this enforcement program work. It's a good idea to have a training (see North Andover training guide for haulers) that explicitly outlines your community's expectations of what is and isn't acceptable for disposal (i.e. will cardboard need to be cut down to 2x2? 3x3?) as well as what's expected of the haulers (leave materials on the curb that aren't properly prepared for recycling? Sticker those items? What do they do if they receive complaints from residents?)

Determine baseline trash and recycling figures before start of program to monitor progress.

Staffing Reinforcements: Experience has shown that the most effective methods of enforcement have included additional staff to help get the ball rolling at the onset of this type of program. It's key to have staff on the ground following the routes, monitoring noncompliant households, and to be available to follow-up with those residents to ensure that they don't become repeat offenders. They're also responsible for monitoring your hauler along the route to make sure they are complying with the town's program. MassDEP has determined (and so have the communities already implementing enforcement campaigns) that additional staff resources are crucial for this to be effective.

Whether that means assigning existing staff to dedicate a portion of their time on enforcement, utilizing volunteers or interns, or hiring additional staff is dependent on many factors, and can only be determined on a community by community basis. Some communities, like North Andover, utilized their volunteer recycling committee in their enforcement. Tyngsborough hired a part-time intern, and Saugus hired a part-time enforcement officer which was so effective, they increased his time in the field to ¾ time position. Either way, communities that have utilized additional staff to actively enforce, have found that it's more than paid for itself in reduced disposal costs and produces a very high return on their investment.

Depending on the size of your community, and the recycling climate that already exists, you may only need someone for the first few months of the program to get it off the ground. In other instances, getting your residents to recycling anything may be a challenge, in which case you may want to consider someone on a more permanent basis.

## Education and Outreach Phase

Develop messaging: Is the program offering new options? Is your focus on the money the town will save? Determine your message and how you want to convey this new information to your residents.

Develop outreach plan: There are many different kinds of low or no cost outreach that you have been used successfully: bill inserts (tax, water), articles in newspapers, messaging on local cable access, information on town website, notices sent home to parents through the schools, banners and sandwich boards in high traffic areas and while more costly, direct mail to residents. Multiple avenues of outreach should be used to be effective.

Communication is key: You will want to be clear and concise but also convey as much information about the changes as you can. It may include newly passed bylaw/ordinance (if applicable). Reiterate current recycling options and outline new recycling options (if applicable, i.e. is there a new drop-off location for cardboard?)

Be sure to give residents plenty of advance warning of the changes in enforcement. It's recommended to start outreach 2-3 months in advance and offer contact information where residents can find out more about the program.

## Enforcement Phase

Hauler Buy-In: It is critical that your hauler be on board and clearly understands what it is your community is doing (i.e. – stickering banned materials, leaving notices, etc.) Haulers are the first point of contact with your residents and their trash, and need to make sure that not only are the residents adhering to the program, but that they are too. If your residents have been sufficiently notified of the program, and do not



comply, but your hauler simply goes about collecting all materials as business as usual, residents may not believe the town is really serious about enforcing against waste ban offenders.

*Train the enforcement officer* as to their role (will they be following the trash and/or recycling trucks? Will they be ahead of the trucks? Will they take note of non-complying households to send a notice later or will they approach at the time of discovery?) The enforcement officer is often the point of contact with residents as to why their materials weren't collected. They may approach the residents or be approached directly and the enforcement officer must know the ins-and-outs of your program and be able to clearly communicate these with residents.

*Must be consistent*. Consistency is so important. If you are telling residents that cardboard must be cut down into 2x2 squares, then make sure the hauler leaves anything bigger and that they are collecting the materials that are cut to spec. You don't want one week for properly prepared cardboard to be left, and then improperly cut cardboard picked up the next. You also want to make sure that all offenders are noted and that if one person is notified of their non-compliance, all non-compliers must be notified.

*Follow-up is Strongly Recommended* with non-complying households. They may need more information about the new rules, or they may simply not want to adhere to the new guidelines. In the latter case, you may want to consider higher levels of enforcement, such as fines for egregious, blatant non-compliers.

*Document Progress*: You will want to make sure you have your baseline figures established prior to the onset of the program so you can monitor your success. This is important for several reasons: 1) It will demonstrate exactly how much money your community is saving and how much material is now being diverted from disposal. 2) It will also assist in building the case for continued enforcement as well as potential staffing increases. As Saugus was able to demonstrate, the enforcement officer more than paid for himself.

*Promote your Success*: It's important to keep your residents informed about how their effort has paid off for the town and the great work they're doing in helping produce less waste. Some suggestions would be to post the disposal tonnage, recycling tonnage and cost savings on the town website or issue press releases to the local paper.

